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MANTELS, FROM WELL-KNOWN AUTHORS.

MRS. M. E. HAWES.

—Nothing so disfigures a room as a meagre, mean little fireplace, a mantel-piece of marble six inches broad, of black composition polished like the mirror of some infernal goddess.

—I wonder that green or streaky slate is not oftener used for mantel-pieces; it is not dear, and would look well in a highly colored room.

—The ordinary white marble mantel-piece is, as I have said, a most disagreeable object. Not because it is of white marble, but because the machine carving is disgracefully coarse and inconsistent, and the material, which is very conspicuous, is not carried out by marble anywhere else.

—Inoffensive plainness is a shade better than offensive ornament; either can be concealed by a covering of embroidery or velvet, stiff enough not to droop and stretched flat so as to admit of brushing. Festooned velvet is always dirty, and not fit to be touched. Lace, in my opinion, is unsuitable because it looks like dress leaving, muslin most absurd of all.

—The sides of an ugly mantel-piece may be hidden by old bullion embroideries secured on thin wool, with very good effect.

ROBERT W. EDIS.

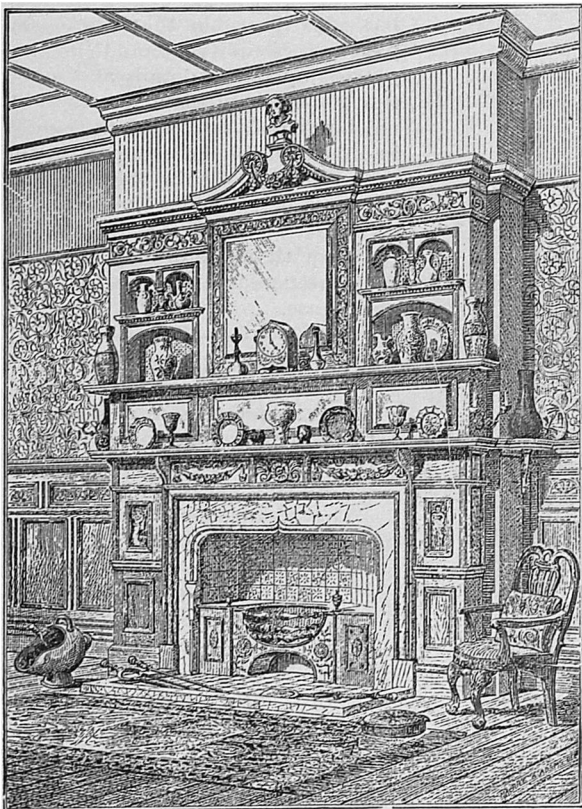
—The mantel-pieces of most of the modern houses are generally of the most commonplace character, abominable in design and construction; perhaps black marble with enormous trusses bad in form, in outline and construction. To leave these as they are would utterly destroy all decorative effect in the room; when everything else looked well they would remain as plague spots on which the eye would continually rest. I would say get rid of them at once.

—In olden days the mantel-pieces were, as a rule, the most important features in a room.

—The grate and chimney-piece should be designed more with the idea of what the room will finally be, than with what at present the owner can afford to make it.

—What a painful contrast do the machine-made modern ones of to-day offer to us, in which there is utter want of taste and design.

—If you do not wish, for various reasons, to remove the existing grates and mantels of your house, you can adapt some design for fitting up over the old mantels with some useful piece of furniture, at a small cost, and thus improve the general effect of your rooms without interference with existing arrangements, and without adopting the commonplace, tasteless and eminently dirty alternative of a wooden



A Dining-Room Chimney-Piece.

ROBERT W. EDIS, F.S.A. ARCHT.

mantel-board, covered with velvet or cloth with senseless and useless fringe.

—Patterns of embroidery for mantel drapery, should, it is true, be massive, stiff and conventional; but, at the same time, if a floral design is desired, the truth of nature must be maintained, or a monstrosity produced.

—The chimney-piece and the grate may be treated as simply as possible, but still with good results, provided the requirements of a grate and chimney-piece are kept strictly in mind, and ornament carefully curtailed.

—The mantel-piece should be an important feature in any room.

ELLA RODMAN CHURCH.

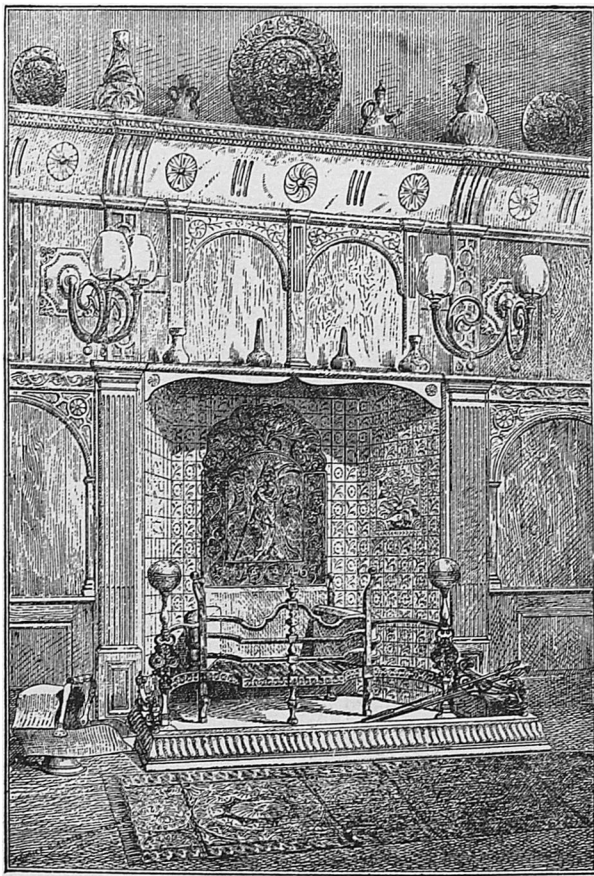
—The usual mantel-piece is a shelf of white marble, with marble slab and jambs beneath; and the sooner this cold, unsuggestive surface is decently buried out of sight the better.

—The prevailing fashion is for wooden mantel-pieces.

MRS. T. W. DEWING.

—The fire-place in the library should be of wood or of colored marble, or of terra cotta—never of white marble.

—A motto about the grate opening is very suitable. It may be original—such a one, perhaps, as “Let your flame illuminate, but not destroy,” or “The colder without the warmer within.”



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—A very beautiful effect can be had by carving the bricks at the back of the fire-place with some appropriate design, or with a coat of arms.

—The mantel-piece and fire-place may be of dark, carved wood, or of some of the marbles or stones that are, when polished, very dark purplish brown, since it were an Aladdin's dream to make it of dark green malachite.

—A mantel-piece of dark wood, with bronze bas-reliefs introduced at the sides of the fire-place, would be very beautiful.

—Let the mantel-piece be of wood painted an amethyst purple.

—About the opening for the fire-place have tiles of cream-white, with a pattern of passion-flowers, of a paler, pinker purple.

—Over the mantel have a mirror in a frame of wood like the mantel-piece.

—A large vase of white and gold, holding calla lilies, azaleas, white and purple fox-gloves, or some tall sprays of pale pink gladiolus, standing on the mantel-piece, will be ornament enough.

—Over the mantel-piece have either two painted panels of figures, with a bronze or rosewood panel between them, holding a scone or mirror, or a little painted arras representing classic figures, with a border of flowers.

RHODA AND AGNES GARRETT.

—Even if the black marble chimney-piece retains its place, a good deal can be done to disguise its ugliness by detaching the great bare sheet of mirror in a gilt frame, usually to be found over the mantel-piece, and either substituting a new one altogether, or else using the old sheet of glass, and framing it in with the same molding as that employed for the surbase.

—If the ornaments on the chimney-piece are really ornaments and are tastefully arranged, the fire-place, which is after all the chief point of interest for nine months out of twelve, will become more worthy of the important position it occupies in the domestic circle.

—The chimney-piece, unless it is taken away and a wooden one substituted, must be covered up with embroidered or simply trimmed drapery.

—A graceful mirror might with advantage take the place of the “handsome gilt chimney glass,” whose lavishly ap-

plied ornament always out-herods Herod in this particular place of honor on the drawing-room mantel-piece.

—Chimney-piece draperies may be made either quite plain or trimmed, but if the latter much care must be taken that the ornament used is faultless, as, being so nearly on a level with the eye, any defect either in design or color will be most conspicuous, and will prove extremely worrying to those constantly in the room.

—Young ladies think they have discovered a royal road to an artistic effect, by working branches which grow as never branches grew, with wide-spreading leaves and lumpy fruits, and they imagine that the effect is heightened by using the coarsest materials and the most olive greens.

[The illustrations on this page we have borrowed from Mr. Edis' book, “Decoration and Furnishing of Town Houses.—Ed.]

HARMONIOUS COLORS.

A whole wall, ceiling, or other space should not be entirely covered over with rich ornament; and so also in a colored piece of drapery or other ornamental work, it is better to have some portion of it much less rich and of less complicated pattern than the rest; and, in some cases, to have only a border round a single ground destitute of any pattern, as it is apt to fatigue the eye when overloaded with equal richness of detail throughout. This is still more important in a colored building, where, if the whole walls, columns, and other parts are covered with elaborate and colored patterns, the eye feels a want of repose; and the same when a building is covered entirely with sculptured ornament without color. The richly carved part not only requires an unsculptured portion, in order that it shall not fatigue the eye, but is improved and set off by the contrast; and contrast is as necessary for effect in form, quantity of detail, position of lines, as it is in color. On this principle great effect is sometimes given to a colored pattern by having a portion of the composition, on the wall of the building, without any color at all; and for the same reason, an expanse of wall in a room often looks well when painted with a single uniform ground surrounded by a rich pattern.

Hogarth truly says: “When the eye is glutted with a succession of variety, it finds relief in a certain degree of sameness; and even plain space becomes agreeable, and, properly introduced and contrasted with variety, adds to it more variety.”

Again, certain colors are better suited for some places than for others, and the brighter and more transparent for higher positions, and if the hangings of a room are scarlet, crimson with gold has a richer and better effect for chairs than scarlet and gold. A carpet may be darker than the general tone of the draperies, and some of its colors may be carried up by the walls, or the curtains; but if the carpet is dark, the furniture shows better by being of a lighter hue. Red, or a light color, is better than blue for table covers; and though green is not recommended for daylight, it lights up well at night, when blue does not; and this, then, often appears black, or when of a light tone is scarcely to be distinguished from green. Much, however, may be done to give blue its proper effect even by artificial light, either by placing a light tone of blue close to the darker one, or by interspersing it with white, which will often lead the eye

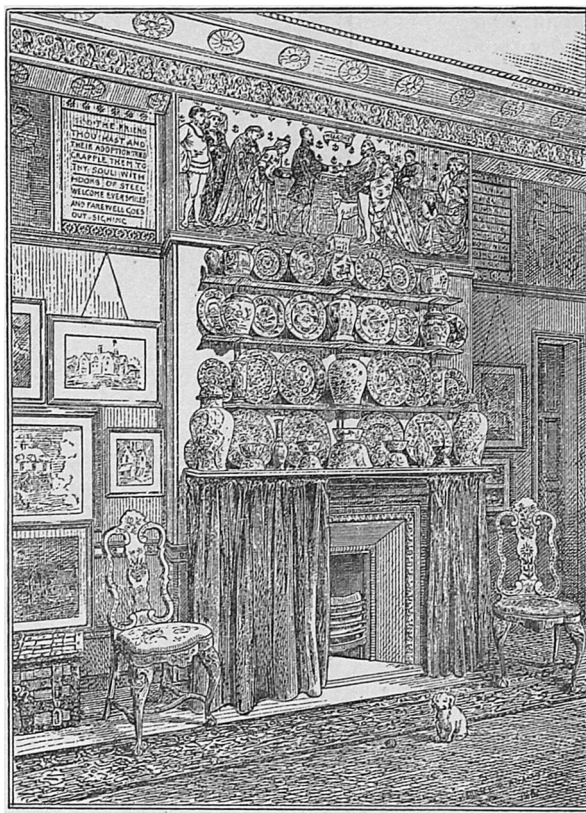
to see the darker blue, and prevent its appearing black. This may be seen in some Persian carpets where two blues are used. And if some of these have too much green for daylight, they have a good effect at night, except when in excess. Dark green, like dark blue, looks darker by artificial light.

Colors that harmonise well may appear less pleasing, in consequence of each not being properly placed next to a neighboring one that accords well with it.

The arrangement must, therefore, be consulted; and it is not enough that they should be such as accord, they must be so placed as to have their full effect on each other. Thus, when a blue is placed only at the edges of a pattern, the centre of which consists of red, yellow and other colors, it looks isolated, it should be connected by being carried through the inner part, in order to give the full combination of all the colors, and the blue would thus be united with the other colors in the centre of the

pattern. When white or yellow is introduced, a pattern is generally improved by the introduction of black, or by a black ground; and an outline of black, separating each color in a complicated pattern, has a good effect.

The combination of warm and cold colors, in proper proportion, is a very great means of obtaining harmony; and thus we find that when red or orange predominates, a good effect is produced by a corresponding quantity of blue.—[PROF. GARDNER WILKINSON.]



A Dining-Room Fireplace showing how an ordinary Grate & Mantel Piece may be treated.

ROBERT W. EDIS, F.S.A. ARCHT.